

University of South Australia



CLASSIFICATION LINKING GUIDELINES

PROFESSIONAL, GROUNDS AND DOCUMENT SERVICES STAFF POSITIONS

Human Resources Unit
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CONTENTS

	Page
1. Overview	3
2. Objectives	3
3. Guiding Principles and Approach	3
4. Relevant Terms	4
5. Classification Linking	5
6. Position Description	5
7. Currently Filled Positions	6
8. New/Vacant Positions	7
9. Advancement to the Higher Level	7
10. Acting in a Linked Position	8
11. Key Considerations	8
11.1 Performance Management	8
11.2 Approvals	9
12. Responsibilities and Authorities	9
13. Cross References	9
14. Further Assistance	9
Attachment 1	10
Classification Linking Administrative Procedures	

1. Overview

The University is a diverse organisation with a varied range of positions and careers. These Guidelines are designed to assist managers and human resources staff with the application and implementation of classification linking. The classification linking process is to be initiated during workforce planning discussions, when an organisational need is identified at the local area.

The University acknowledges that the duties and responsibilities of a position may, in certain circumstances, extend beyond a single Higher Education Officer (HEO) classification level. The classification linking guidelines provides local areas with the capacity to link classification levels for such positions.

Classification linking can occur when a position's duties and responsibilities are likely to increase in complexity and depth in line with the needs of the organisational area. The higher level position responsibilities and work require advanced skills, knowledge and experience and are consistent with the classification of the higher level. This higher level is based on organisation needs and placement of a staff member is dependent on the skills, knowledge and experience of the staff member.

As per the applicable Industrial Instrument, the guidelines relate to the use of classification linking for professional, grounds or Document Services staff positions.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy (Policy No HR-27.0), Performance Management Policy (HR-25.0), Remuneration & Reward Policy (Policy No HR-28.0) and associated guidelines as well as the applicable Industrial Instrument.

2. Objectives

The objectives of these guidelines are to:

- Provide managers with a framework and procedures for linking classifications.
- Assist managers' understanding of classification linking and provide tools for utilising classification linking.
- Ensure consistency in the application of classification linking.
- Identify circumstances that warrant the use of classification linking and the appropriate process and justification that must be followed to support the linking of a position.
- Ensure that the application and approval process is sound and well documented.

3. Guiding Principles and Approach

The broad principles and approach embodied within these guidelines are listed below. The process of classification linking must be:

- Equitable and fair across the University.

- Initiated by a University manager who identifies organisational needs as part of workforce planning considerations that are consistent with the strategic plans for the area.
- Applied to enhance the capacity of staff to meet the needs of the organisation.
- Applied to enhance workforce planning within the area.
- Related to a position not a person, with no guarantee the base HEO level will change to a higher level automatically.
- Underpinned by effective performance management.

4. Relevant Terms

Base Position is the source position (lower level) from which the higher level position extends.

Classification refers to the assignment of positions into the HEO classification structures of the University as per the relevant framework.

Classification Linking occurs when duties and responsibilities increase in complexity and depth in line with the needs of the organisational area and therefore may span over two HEO levels. The higher level position responsibilities and work require advanced skills, knowledge and experience and are consistent with the classification of the higher level. This higher level is based on organisation needs and placement of a staff member is dependent on the demonstration of skills, knowledge and experience of the staff member to meet the requirements of the higher level.

Cost Centre Manager is the person who is responsible for the financial management of a specific cost centre who may or may not be the Supervisor. Typically, these are Heads of Schools, Division Managers, Unit Directors and Research Institute Directors.

Professional, Grounds and Document Services Staff are staff employed and appointed within the HEO classification levels.

Higher Level Position is the one level higher position that is the extension of the base position.

Hybrid Position Description is the position description which provides details about the base level and higher level position duties, responsibilities and selection criteria (the linked position).

Industrial Instrument refers to the applicable Collective/Enterprise Agreement, Award, Australian Workplace Agreement, contract of employment or legislation.

Job Evaluation is the process used to measure the relative job worth of positions within an organisation at a point in time.

Local Human Resources (HR) Staff Member – the person at the local area with responsibility for human resources.

Merit Selection is the process applied to determine whether an applicant has the abilities, aptitude, skills, qualifications, knowledge, experience and achievement, characteristics and personal qualities relevant to carrying out the duties in question. Refer Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy and Guidelines (as amended or replaced).

Position Description provides details about a position within the University environment and is the written outcome from a job analysis process.

Supervisor is the person who is responsible for the performance management and supervision of the staff member.

5. Classification Linking

The following criteria apply to the application of the classification linking guidelines:

- The classification linking process links two HEO levels together to form a linked position.
- Position linking is in response to workforce planning needs of the local area and is consistent with long term strategic and/or operational plans.
- Funding is borne by the local area's cost centre and will need to support the full range of costs associated with the linked position.
- There must be sufficient need for responsibilities at a higher, more complex level to justify the establishment of a linked position. Classification levels must be confirmed through the job evaluation process.
- Classification linking is a separate and distinct process to reclassification and is not a mechanism for rewarding staff but a valid workforce planning tool.
- Movement from the linked lower level position to the higher level is not automatic and will only occur when the criteria for advancement is met through the University's performance management process and business requirements of the local level.
- Classification linking is designed as a management tool and should be formalised during the local area's strategic workforce planning processes.
- Relativity issues with other positions across the local area and across the University must be considered and addressed throughout the approval process.
- Positions designated as linked will be reviewed at the time of becoming vacant. At this point, it will be necessary to clarify whether the position remains linked. The position may return to the base level or may be considered for reclassification to the higher level through the job evaluation process.

6. Position Description

Classification linking will only occur when there is a potential requirement for the role to develop into a higher level. Duties and responsibilities in the base level position must increase in complexity and depth to be consistent with the work value and classification of the higher level.

The hybrid position description must accurately reflect the main duties of the position and not inflate the purpose of the position. The criteria of the higher level position must be written in a way so as to eliminate duplication and ensure a clear distinction exists between the two levels.

Duties and responsibilities at the higher level will require more advanced skills, knowledge and qualifications than the base level. Qualification requirements at the higher level should reflect whether the qualification is essential to perform the duties of the position or whether satisfactory progress towards the completion of the qualification is acceptable.

7. Currently Filled Positions

The Cost Centre Manager/Supervisor of an area may nominate a position(s) to be considered for classification linking. Nomination will be in response to the workforce planning needs of the local area and will be consistent with the long term strategic and/or operational plans. A business case must be developed for the linking of the position and supported by the Director/Head of School/Division Manager/Research Institute Director. (See Attachment 1 for details on how to prepare a business case).

Once the Cost Centre Manager/Supervisor has nominated a position to be reviewed for classification linking, a hybrid position description covering both levels must be developed in consultation with the local HR staff member. The hybrid position description must reflect and build on the requirements of the base level position responsibilities, with specific selection criteria, scope and responsibility for the higher level.

Assessment and development of the incumbent into the criteria for the higher level position should be addressed within the business case, along with expected timelines.

The business case and hybrid position description is forwarded to the HR Unit for evaluation. Once the evaluations have been confirmed, approval will be sought by the Remuneration team from the Director: HR.

The selection criteria and responsibilities for the higher level position are now clearly identified. At this point the hybrid position description and the business case may be approved as a linked position. If the position is not approved, further discussions shall occur between the HR Unit (Remuneration Team) and the local area.

The incumbent and Supervisor discuss and identify opportunities for the incumbent to develop into the higher level role. This discussion occurs as part of the performance management process and a performance management plan is developed.

The performance management plan should detail how the incumbent will achieve the advanced knowledge and skills to perform the higher level role including professional development opportunities and training. Timelines to meet the selection criteria and commencement in the higher level position should also be addressed.

Assessment against the requirements for the higher level position description occurs through the University's performance management process. Advancement to the higher level should also consider the local area's business requirements.

Where there is more than one eligible internal candidate a modified merit selection process should occur. Eligible candidates are defined as those at the same level as the base level position and where there is more than one similar base level position.

8. New/Vacant Positions

The Cost Centre Manager/Supervisor of an area may nominate a position(s) to be considered for classification linking. Nomination will be in response to the workforce planning needs of the local area and will be consistent with the long term strategic and/or operational plans. A business case must be developed for the linking of the position and supported by the Director/Head of School/Division Manager/Research Institute Director.

Once the Cost Centre Manager/Supervisor has nominated a position to be reviewed for classification linking, a hybrid position description covering both levels must be developed in consultation with the local HR staff member. The hybrid position description must reflect and build on the requirements of the base level position responsibilities, with specific selection criteria, scope and responsibilities for the higher level.

Development of the successful applicant into the criteria for the higher level position should be addressed within the business case, along with expected timelines.

The business case and hybrid position description is forwarded to the HR Unit for evaluation. Once the evaluations have been confirmed, the selection criteria and responsibilities for the higher level position are now clearly identified. At this point the hybrid position description and the business case may be approved as a linked position by the Director: HR through the Remuneration Team. If the position is not approved, further discussions shall occur between the HR Unit (Remuneration Team) and the local area.

The position is advertised as a linked position with the hybrid position description showing the scope and responsibility and the selection criteria for both the base level and higher level position. Specific information on how to apply for linked classification positions will be included in the recruitment document for the position.

Through the University's merit selection process a selection and appointment can be made at either classification level. Appointment to the higher level will be dependent on the applicant meeting the essential criteria for both classification levels.

If appointment is at the base level, a discussion is held with the Supervisor to identify opportunities for the incumbent to develop into the higher role. This discussion occurs as part of the performance management process and a performance management plan is developed.

The performance management plan should detail how the incumbent will achieve the advanced knowledge and skills to perform the higher level role including professional development opportunities and training. Timelines to meet the selection criteria and commencement in the higher level position should also be addressed.

Assessment against the requirements for the higher level position description occurs through the University's performance management process. Advancement to the higher level should also consider the local level's business requirements.

9. Advancement to the Higher Level

Advancement to the higher HEO level is not an automatic incremental progression.

The criterion for advancing staff to the higher HEO level is based on the skills, knowledge and experience developed by the incumbent in the role. Advancement to the higher level should also consider the local area's business requirements.

For a staff member to progress, the selection criteria of the higher level position must be met. The performance management system of the University should be used to support this process.

The decision on whether the incumbent meets the selection criteria rests with the Cost Centre Manager/Supervisor, in conjunction with the local HR staff member. Assessment will be based on the incumbent meeting the selection criteria for the higher level.

Where education and/or qualifications are required for the higher level position, it may not be necessary for the staff member to have completed the qualification. However, satisfactory progress towards achievement of the qualification must be shown for recommendation to advancement. If completion of a qualification is an essential requirement the position description should reflect this requirement.

It is recommended that the local HR staff member is present at all discussions when advancement to the higher level is being assessed.

If advancement to the higher level position is not supported, the Supervisor must provide the staff member with feedback about the assessment against the selection criteria and why advancement was not supported. This feedback and the strategies agreed to assist the staff member in their development to the higher level will then be included in the next performance management cycle.

The University's Grievance procedures apply to this process.

If business needs at the local level require the higher level and if the staff member meets the selection criteria the Cost Centre Manager must submit appropriate paperwork to the Director/Division Manager/Head of School/Research Institute Director for support.

Once approved the local HR staff member will liaise with the HR Unit to organise appropriate paperwork and actioning on the human resources information system.

10. Acting in a linked position

There may be opportunities for a staff member to act in a linked position without the need for merit selection (for example, less than six months). In these circumstances, the Supervisor, in consultation with the local HR staff member shall consider the business needs of the local area together with the skills, knowledge and experience of the staff member, to determine the appropriate HEO level for the duration (either base level or higher level). The substantive level of the incumbent also needs to be considered.

11. Key Considerations

11.1 Performance Management

The University's Performance Management Scheme underpins classification linking.

It is imperative that performance management is in place to guide the development of the incumbent and facilitate the movement between classification levels in a linked position as per the Performance Management Policy and Guidelines (as amended or replaced).

11.2 Approvals

Approval of positions for classification linking will be assessed by the Director: HR with reference to the demonstrated merits of the case and will not be justifiable with reference to precedent alone.

Prior to any offer being made to a staff member, all positions for classification linking must be:

- documented by the staff member's Supervisor, including a position description, and
- supported by the relevant:
 - Cost Centre Manager,
 - Director/Division Manager/Head of School/Research Institute Director,
 - Pro Vice Chancellor/Executive Director, and
 - Director: HR.

12. Responsibilities and Authorities

Responsibility for the application of these guidelines rests with the relevant SMG Member, Heads of Schools, Directors, Division Managers and Research Institute Directors.

13. Cross References

As amended or replaced:

- Performance Management Policy and Guidelines (HR -25.0)
- Remuneration and Reward Policy (HR-28.0)
- Selection and Recruitment Policy and Guidelines (HR-27.0)
- Applicable Industrial Instrument
- Vice Chancellor's Delegation of Authority

14. Further Assistance

Management and staff may seek further advice about classification linking from their local HR staff member or the Remuneration Team in the HR Unit.

Attachment 1

Classification Linking Administrative Procedures

- 1 Cost Centre Manager/Supervisor reviews (or designs if a new position) the base position description to ensure accuracy.
- 2 In conjunction with the local HR staff member, the Cost Centre Manager/Supervisor drafts the hybrid position description, specifying the advanced knowledge, skills, experience and responsibilities required for the higher level position.
- 3 A business case for a linked position should be submitted to the relevant Director/ Division Manager/Head of School/Research Institute Director to gain support. The business case should include information and identify issues surrounding the linking of the position including:
 - base position and higher level position description,
 - availability of funding,
 - relativities within the area,
 - strategic organisational need and workforce planning issues,
 - identification of staff affected,
 - assessment and development of staff into the criteria for the higher position,
 - estimated timelines, and
 - any other relevant information.

The Director/Manager/Head of School/Research Institute Director authorisation and support is required as well as Cost Centre Manager approval.
- 4 The hybrid position description, appropriate authorisations and any other relevant information (for example, organisational structure) is forwarded to the R&WS Team in the HR Unit.
- 5 Remuneration Consultant in conjunction with the local HR staff member undertakes the following;
 - review of position descriptions,
 - review of all relevant information, and
 - job evaluation and subsequent classifications of hybrid position description.
- 6 Director: Human Resources approves the linked position and provides feedback if approval is not given.
- 7 Local HR staff member to liaise with Supervisor regarding outcome.